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Cleveland teaches the write way

By Julie Washington

Albert Joseph hates garbled English. He wages a constant battle against the overloaded sentence, the incomprehensible paragraph, and the high-sounding but imprecise word.

His 20-year quixotic fight has taken him into the classroom, the executive boardroom, law offices, the Central Intelligence Agency, NASA and around the globe.

Joseph calculates that he has personally taught more people to write than anyone who has ever lived.

He bases that claim on the fact that a teacher who worked for the maximum possible number of years, never took a vacation or a sick day, and taught four large classes per year would have instructed 13,200 people. Joseph estimates he has taught 16,000 to 17,000 people to write.

He has even ventured across the Atlantic to Britain, telling the English that even though they invented the language, they can still learn a thing or two from Americans.

But most of the time Joseph, 53, wages his battle quietly from his small office in the Hanna Building, running his international business which sells a packaged writing course designed to teach businessmen to write clearly.

The packaged course is an extension of the material Joseph taught in a writing course at Western Reserve University during the 1960s. He received so many moonlighting offers from area corporations wanting him to instruct their executives that Joseph began the Industrial Writing Institute.

The Standard Oil Co. (Ohio) was the company's sole client when it began, but it soon added B.F. Goodrich Co. and NASA's Lewis Research Center. The Lewis Research Center connection

led him to consulting jobs in Washington with NASA, the CIA and other government agencies.

As the company grew, Joseph did not want to train other teachers, so he expanded using audio-visual means. WVIZ Channel 25 produced a videotaped version of "Put It In Writing," which was shown on PBS stations all over the country from 1968 to 1970.

That PBS program led to the packaged course which Joseph began marketing in 1972. It consists of tape cassettes, slides and workbooks for teachers and students. Joseph estimates that he has sold about 250,000 workbooks since he began offering the course.

The packaged course sells for \$265, and the workbooks cost \$22 each.

"It's by far the most widely used writing course in the English-speaking world," he said. His company has offices in Canada, Britain, Australia, South Africa and Hong Kong.

Earlier this year he introduced a British version of the writing course for use by British businessmen. The cassettes were re-taped using British Broadcasting Corp. broadcasters and the textbooks were rewritten to incorporate language and spelling differences.

For instance, the period in Britain is called a full stop, Joseph said. "That's a pretty important word in a writing course," he added.

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